Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc.

Journal of Interpretation

Volume 23 | Issue 1 Article 4

2014

Demands and Strategies of Interpreting a Theatrical Performance into American Sign Language

Miriam Ganz Horwitz
Gallaudet University, Miriamganz1@gmail.com

Demands and Strategies of Interpreting a Theatrical Performance into American Sign Language

Cover Page Footnote
Acknowledgements I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to those who contributed and supported this research. Thank you to Disney Theatrical Group, Candace Broecker-Penn, Lynnette Taylor, Alan Champion, Dr. Cynthia Roy, Dr. Brenda Nicodemus, doctoral candidate Danielle Hunt, my interpreting mentors, the JOI reviewers and editors, my 2012 Gallaudet MAI classmates and my loving family and friends. Dedication In loving memory of the late, great Alan Champion July 8, 1955 to April 22, 2011 Alan Champion, who interpreted theatre for over 35 years, opened up hundreds of Broadway and regional theatre productions to Deaf and hard of hearing audience members over three decades. Alan used his many talents as part of the team that delivered the first ASL interpretation on Broadway in 1980. He was also a co-founder of the highly acclaimed Theatre Development Fund Theatre Interpreting seminar held at the Julliard School in New York City.

Providing access to a theatrical performance for a deaf audience is a complex task that involves a variety of skills. Theatrical companies spend months preparing for a performance by conducting production meetings, blocking choreography, creating costuming, sets, and lighting, and rehearsing with actors all of which are designed to culminate in a dynamic artistic expression on stage. Likewise, for the theatrical interpreter, preparation is a complicated multi-phase task with a variety of linguistic and paralinguistic demands that are unlike interpreting discourse in other settings. Interpreters must translate and interpret a fully scripted source language, the theatrical script, into the target language while expressing the vision of the creative team and the actors' embodiment of the words. In theatre, artistic expression can be expressed through song, dance, emotional scenes as well as lighting, theatrical effects, and action, among many other devices. Interpreters must negotiate said forms of artistic expression in order to achieve dynamic equivalence. Ultimately, the goal of the theatrical interpreter is for deaf audience members to have a theatrical experience equivalent to that of hearing audience members.

Gebron (1996) and Rocks (2011) addressed considerations for theatrical interpreting such as placement, technical considerations, and accounting for visual information and stage action. Studies on equivalence in translation (Gile, 2009, Larson, 1998, Nida, 1964) have provided insight into the process of translation and considerations for attaining equivalence. However, little investigation has been conducted in regard to the specific linguistic and paralinguistic demands of English to American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation for the purpose of equivalence in theatrical interpreting. For the purpose of this study paralinguistics refers to the vocal and sound effects that may communicate meaning. This study examined the phenomenon of theatrical interpretation, explored the interpreters' process in seeking equivalence when interpreting for performance, and will describe the strategies they employed to meet the linguistic and paralinguistic demands they confront in this setting. In this study, I investigate the following question: What are the linguistic and paralinguistic demands and interpreting strategies found in the ASL interpretation of a theatrical performance? What linguistic and paralinguistic considerations do interpreters make during their process to satisfy these demands?

Background

Theatrical Interpreting Process

The theatrical interpreting process includes the use of pre-determined language (in the form of a script), script analysis, interpreter team rehearsals, and live interpretation. This multi-phase process requires that interpreters commit to many hours of preparatory work and employ a blend of translation and interpretation methods in order to meet the demands of the interpretation task. Challenges of theatrical interpreting include, but are not limited to 1) the inability to interrupt rapid speech, 2) conveying auditory information created by musical aesthetics and sound effects, 3) mitigating stage action as visual information which may be missed by deaf patrons attending to the interpretation, 4) negotiating the impact of processing time on the interpreting team, and 5) interpreting nuances and meaning in complicated script language. All of these challenges have great implications on the preparation process and work of theatrical interpreters. According to Demers (2005), preparation is essential to the effectiveness of the interpretation. Therefore, acquiring more information in regards to the challenges of and preparation process for interpreting a theatrical event is essential to the success of theatrical interpreters in meeting the needs of the deaf theatre patrons.

Gebron (1996) asserted that the translation process involves independent script work and teamwork with negotiating sign choices. Gebron suggested that interpreters not rely solely on the script for determining their language choices, but rather observe rehearsals to learn more about the characters and the actors' interpretation and performance of the script. The approach described by Gebron includes gathering materials and conducting research, dividing character assignments between interpreters, signing through the script a few times to discover and learn the script and impromptu sign ideas, reading the script and identifying information that needs further investigation, working on challenging moments with the interpreting team, making agreements for sign choices that are shared lines or concepts and watching rehearsals and performances. Gebron's book provides a general outline of the preparation process for theatrical interpreting; however, there are many different approaches depending upon the interpreter and the interpreting team. Different genres of theatre (Shakespeare, musical theatre, Commedia dell'arte, contemporary drama, etc.) as well as individual theatre pieces have unique demands and may require different methods. Greater insights into the different processes employed by interpreting teams for a variety of theatrical events have yet to be investigated thoroughly; this study examines one team's approach.

Translation Equivalence

The work of an interpreter is to transmit a message from one language, the source language (sL), to another language, the target language (tL), while retaining meaning (Seleskovitch, 1994). The process of translation and interpretation involves seeking the meaning as well as considering the setting, purpose of the speech act, the speaker and receiver's backgrounds, and the speaker's goal (Roy, 2000; Russell & Shaw, 2009). The interpreter's ultimate aim is to achieve equivalence. Theatrical interpreting is no different; however, there are a variety of considerations that when applied to theatrical interpreting must be further examined in respect to how they will influence the interpreter's linguistic decisions. In reference to theatrical interpreting, Gebron (1996) stated, "Puns, word-play and even basic dialogue between characters are highly inter-dependent and need to be discussed and translated to maintain consistency and communicate accurate meaning" (p. 45). Gebron was referring to the purposeful word choices and writing of theatrical dialogue and the need for the nuances of the dialogue to be examined thoroughly by interpreters. Rocks (2011) suggested that a translation process be used for interpreting theatre as the interpreter has time to analyze the script and make informed decisions about wordplay, character traits, and so forth. Considerations such as theatrical aesthetics (e.g. lighting, music) and theatrical devices (e.g. set changes, stage action, choreography) must also be taken into account when interpreting in this specialization. Little research for this specialization exists; therefore, considerations for achieving equivalence when interpreting theatrical performances with respect to the abovementioned theatre aesthetics and devices must be investigated further.

Nida (1964) conducted a comprehensive study of translation and discussed the dynamic dimensions in communication by illustrating that the process of producing equivalent meaning in translation is a result of matching the parts of utterances as well as reproducing the "total dynamic character of the communication" (p. 120). Nida identified the five phases of communication as 1) the subject matter, 2) the participants, 3) the speech act, 4) the code used (i.e. the language), and 5) the message (the way the subject matter is encoded). According to Nida, formal equivalence seeks to match the message in the target language with the different

elements of the source language and is constantly compared to determine accuracy (p. 159). Whereas, Nida stated,

> A translation of dynamic equivalence aims at complete naturalness of expression, and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture; it does not insist that he understand the cultural patterns of the source-language context in order to comprehend the message. (p. 159)

Nida recognized the spectrum of translation between formal and dynamic equivalence (p. 160). This study applies Nida's theory of equivalence and the spectrum of translation to the practice of translation and interpretation in a theatrical interpretation in order to discover the linguistic and paralinguistic demands and strategies interpreters employ throughout their process in their pursuit of creating an equivalently dynamic theatrical experience.

In theatre, the discourse is a rehearsed script, intended to appear like natural discourse. Meaning-based translation was investigated by Larson (1998), who took a comprehensive look at form and meaning, types of translation, semantic structure of language and steps for translation work. Larson addressed elements of translation such as relationships between lexical items, lexical equivalents when concepts are unknown or shared, propositional structure and analysis, communication relations, cohesion and discourse genres. Larson's examination of discourse genres addresses a variety of written text genres such as narrative, descriptive, expository and procedural and dialogue discourse; however, Larson did not address translation for texts such as scripts used for performance. This study examines the translation and interpretation considerations specific to a performed script for theatrical purposes.

Musical Aesthetics Influence Sign Production

In a musical theatre performance, there are a variety of theatrical devices that communicate character motivations and advance the plot, many of which are communicated through songs and musical dance performances. The music itself has musical aesthetics, elements such as rhythm, volume, and musical accents, which create a mood, tone and a feeling for the audience. Musical aesthetics such as a quick, sharp, bouncy rhythm may communicate a happy, joyous mood while a song in a slow, dissonant, minor key may communicate a sad or scary feeling or mood. A musical note that is sustained or increases in volume may give a feeling or express a deeper layer of emotion. These musical aesthetics are abundant in musical theatre and carry meaning and emotion while creating a specific mood for the audience. These musical aesthetics can be interpreted into the tL through the use of linguistic devices in ASL such as reiteration of signs, signing with parallel rhythms, and manipulations in the use of sign space. The manipulation of these ASL linguistic devices can result in a comparable "visual aesthetic" that helps to replicate the tone and mood of the music as well as the theatrical moment. This is important auditory information for the interpreters to consider, as those factors combined will impact the interpretation.

Theatrical interpreters must consider when these musical aesthetics carry meaning and communicate that musical expression and information accurately and effectively into the tL, in an equivalent manner. This study discovered that the interpreters aimed to achieve dynamic equivalence from the sL to the tL for these musical aesthetics in a variety of ways, enabling them to capture meaning and, as Nida (1964) describes it, the "total dynamic character of the communication" (p. 120). The musical aesthetic categories examined in this study were: rhythm;

musical "accents" (emphasis); volume changes; and extension (elongated notes and words). Specific examples of such will be provided in the following sections.

Stage Action

Demands of visual information. A theatrical production tells a story in a variety of ways. Sometimes the story is solely auditory, delivered through dialogue between characters or a character's song. Sometimes important plot details are communicated by the actions of the characters on stage. For example, an important letter is thrown in a fireplace never to be delivered to its intended recipient. Rocks (2011) discussed the complexity of competing points of focus for deaf audiences who often have to negotiate between the interpretation of the dialogue and the visual narrative of the performance. This is due to the fact that interpreters are often placed off to the side of the stage. When stage action (solely visual information) occurs, interpreters direct the deaf audience's attention to the stage by "throwing focus." In effect they guide the deaf audience members' eyes to the action that they may otherwise miss while focusing on the interpreters. Throwing focus, or "to throw focus," is done in a few ways: interpreters may fold their hands and look to the stage, look at the stage or quickly shift their eye gaze in the direction of the action. Evidence of such "throwing focus" strategies was seen in multiple ways and often throughout this study. These strategies will be illustrated in a later section of this study.

Demands of concurrent visual and auditory information. Rocks (2011) also addressed the challenge of negotiating simultaneous visual information that may support or contradict the dialogue and the need for interpreters to be very familiar with the performance. Rocks' (2011) study found that many theatrical interpreters were not considering that spoken language and non-verbal aspects of the play as interdependent. Due to the simultaneous nature of visual and auditory information, it is crucial for interpreters to witness staging rehearsals and/or view recordings so that the interpreters can negotiate various translation decisions with the staging in mind. Thus they can throw focus at appropriate times and lessen the competing focus challenges for the deaf audience. Interpreters must know the value of the visual information occurring on stage in order to make linguistic decisions.

When information is delivered simultaneously through auditory and visual channels, an interpreter must assess what visual information is important to see, how to incorporate the information, as well as when and how to share focus with the stage. Interpreters use several strategies to mitigate this demand. According to Gebron (1996), an interpreter may decide to delete some lines from the interpretation or combine lines in order to allow time for the deaf audience to see important stage action. The interpreter must determine in advance if the action or the words provide more important information (Gebron, 1996, p. 56). In order to make these decisions, it is crucial for the interpreter to know which things are essential to the plot and character development. This study examined the various strategies used by the interpreters to share focus when concurrent auditory and visual information occurred on stage.

Rapid speech and lag time. "The show must go on!" is a phrase often heard in the theatre world. This too is the case in theatrical interpreting as well. Interpreters are in a time-constrained setting and do not have the ability to stop, interrupt or slow down the speakers. This can be very challenging when the performance contains rapid speech and fast turn taking.

According to Tannen (1984), high involvement style conversational discourse includes faster rate of speech, faster turn taking, avoidance of inter-turn pauses, cooperative overlap, participatory listenership and latching of utterances. These discourse features are often found in theatrical discourse due to the dramatic nature of theatrical productions. Tannen's study on conversational discourse can be applied to an examination of how these discourse features appear in interpreted discourse and how interpreters navigate features such as rapid speech, fast turn taking, overlap and latching. This study addressed the implications of said features and identified strategies interpreters employed to negotiate high involvement style conversational discourse during a theatrical performance.

According to Cokely (1992), interpreters must receive enough of the sL message, before they can begin to produce the tL. Each interpreter has their own length of time necessary for comprehension, finding semantic equivalents and producing the tL which can fluctuate throughout an interpretation. Sometimes time lag, also known as lag time, can be employed as a strategy to allow time for comprehension (Napier, McKee, & Goswell, 2006). This lag time, or processing time, in theatrical interpreting must remain short, as the dialogue is often rapid and interpreters cannot interrupt the speakers if they fall too far behind the sL or their short-term memory fails. When interpreting in teams, one interpreter's lag time may impact the other interpreter's process and subsequent interpretation, which presents a challenge to a theatrical interpreting team. In theatrical interpreting, the interpreters have the script in advance and are able to process the sL for comprehension and finding semantic equivalents for the tL. One might hypothesize that interpreters then need little to no lag time for the purpose of comprehension and finding semantic equivalence; however, this is not the case in most theatrical interpreting. Interpreters may develop tL translations to aid in more economic tL production during time constrained-moments, but rarely are whole interpretations memorized in advance. This study examined the strategies employed by the interpreters to mitigate lag time demands in regards to rapid speech and overlapping dialogue.

Methods

Participants

Three ASL/English interpreters participated in this study: Candace Broecker-Penn, Alan Champion, and Lynnette Taylor. They are native ASL users, having acquired ASL from their deaf parents. In addition, they are certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), have a background in theatre, and each has interpreted for theatre for more than 35 years.

Task

This qualitative study began with the analysis of a musical theatre performance for the general public, interpreted into American Sign Language (ASL). *Mary Poppins*, a musical produced by Disney Theatrical Group in New York City at the New Amsterdam Theatre on Broadway, provides ASL interpreted performances throughout the year. *Mary Poppins* the musical was inspired by the Disney movie musical, which was adapted from the book by P.L. Travers. It is a story about a magical nanny that changes the lives of a struggling family in London. The interpreting team of three interpreters, who have interpreted the musical several times, were recorded interpreting for a live performance of the musical. Twenty minutes of this

recorded interpretation was used as data for this study. Permission was granted from Disney Theatrical Group as well as the interpreting team for use of the performance recording and interview videos for the purpose of this study. Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of Gallaudet University as well. Data were stored at the Disney Theatrical Group offices in New York City and consent forms were stored in a secure office.

The twenty-minute video recording was coded and analyzed using ELAN, a transcription software program. In addition, two interviews were conducted at the Disney Theatrical Group offices in New York City. These interviews included two interpreters from the interpreting team, Lynnette Taylor and Candace Broecker-Penn. The first interview, conducted following a preliminary analysis of the video data, was aimed to explore the challenges in interpreting the musical as well as the interpreters' approach and preparation process for the task. Theatrical elements and ASL linguistic features pertaining to five categories were coded and analyzed. The categories were 1) theatrical interpreting process, 2) translation equivalence, 3) musical aesthetics influence sign production, 4) stage action, and 5) rapid speech and lag time. These categories are based on the linguistic demands and subsequent interpreting strategies that differ from other settings in which ASL-English interpreter's work.

A second interview with the interpreters was conducted after I had completed a thorough analysis of the findings from the video data. During the second interview examples from each category of the data analysis were shown to the interpreters and they expounded on the demands and strategies employed for each example. Videos of both interviews were transcribed and examined for patterns and themes in the interpreters' discussion of their work.

Results

Theatrical interpreting process

This study revealed the process that three highly experienced interpreters have refined over more than two decades of theatrical interpreting work. During interviews, Lynnette and Candace described their approach for interpreting *Mary Poppins*, noting that a variety of approaches could be used and that theirs was unique to this interpreting team and to this production. The interpreting team observed performances of the show five times before interpreting the performance for the first time. The first two times the interpreters observed the show, they simply watched it to learn about and discuss the pivotal points in the story, interesting details in the play, and their own experiences as audience members. By experiencing and discussing the show in this manner at the start of their process, they were able to identify the key elements of the theatrical experience that needed to be considered and conveyed in their interpretation. During the third observation, the interpreters began by standing in the back of the theatre house and improvising and experimenting with their interpretations. At this rehearsal, the interpreters examined how turn taking occurred between characters and which character roles they would assume and for which scenes. The interpreters also watched for what the characters were physically doing on stage (placement and stage action), and how the characters responded to one another. Additionally, the team discussed when and if it was appropriate to sign in unison with one another, which they decided to reserve for very few moments and for specific purposes. They also discussed when language agreements were necessary. Language agreements in this case refer to previously agreed-upon sign choice that multiple interpreters use to maintain a clear message and consistency throughout the performance interpretation. Finally, the team

considered the pace of the dialogue and noted moments when their interpretation needed compression and/or expansion.

At subsequent rehearsals, the team interpreted the show in the back of the theatre house in time with the live performance. Each time the interpreting team rehearsed their interpretation, they experimented and debriefed about what translations were effective, ineffective, what needed to be clarified, what needed to be more economic to account for stage action, where throwing focus was necessary; they modified their interpretation as needed. More of the interpreting process will be illuminated in the following sections as various demands and strategies are illustrated.

Translation Equivalence

Extensive analysis of the data found that the interpreters produced a dynamically equivalent interpretation, as described by Nida (1964), by using ASL and adhering to Deaf cultural norms. The interpretation was not a literal interpretation, word-for-word (or word- for-sign) and keeping to sL (script) structure sentence by sentence, but rather natural ASL discourse structure and grammar were followed by each interpreter. The interpreters drew from personal experience as children of deaf adults, reflected upon years of involvement in the Deaf Community and used their rehearsal process to explore natural language for effective interpretations. The interviews uncovered a variety of linguistic and paralinguistic considerations made by the interpreting team for their interpretation of *Mary Poppins*. This section will focus on some of the linguistic considerations, while later sections will illuminate some of the paralinguistic considerations.

There are many examples of dynamic equivalence in the team's interpretation of *Mary Poppins*. The following are just a few examples that show specific decisions the interpreters made to create a tL rich with natural language use and culturally appropriate norms while considering the themes of the show, individual character goals, as well as relational information, dramatic context and meaning. In the interviews, the interpreters discussed the importance of knowing the audience in order to produce an appropriate tL, though they recognized the difficulty in this as most theatre audiences have a mix of language preferences and are unknown until the performance time. Candace explained that this team chose to work toward a dynamically equivalent interpretation for *Mary Poppins*, reaching for ASL as a tL. According to Lynnette, a theatrical interpretation must include the tone, emotion, information, and themes from the play with close attention to natural language use in the tL in order to create an accurate and equivalent interpretation. The subject of names, proper nouns and relational information appeared in the interpreter interviews in reference to some of their tL decisions. The interpreters discussed how relational information appears differently in various languages as well as how names and proper nouns may be emphasized in some languages more than others.

Candace and Lynnette shared that during rehearsals the interpreters considered how names and proper nouns appeared in the sL and examined if they were being used for a specific purpose and with frequency, they then decided how to interpret it into the tL. The following example illustrates the emphasis their consideration of relational information between the languages for the purpose of producing a dynamically equivalent tL. Early in the performance, just prior to Mary Poppins coming to work for the Banks family, the children's previous nanny quits, citing the children's awful behavior. The mother talks with the household staff concerning her worries about having to inform her husband of the need to replace the nanny. The song

begins and the mother sings, "What on earth am I going to say to Mr. Banks?" Candace interpreted this utterance in the following manner: ME HAVE-TO TELL MY HUSBAND. When asked why she signed MY HUSBAND instead of fingerspelling "Mr. Banks" or using a name sign, Candace explained that choosing to sign MY HUSBAND was for the purpose of clarifying relationships early in the show, which took precedence over the actual name in that moment. She believed the husband-wife relationship was crucial to establish at the start of this scene, so that the subsequent actions, dialogue and song would be clearer to the audience. Lynnette reinforced Candace's decision by explaining that this was also an example of natural language in the tL. According to Lynnette, names can be important in English, likewise in ASL relational and functional information takes precedence over proper names.

The following is an example of interpreters mitigating sL and tL differences with respect to use of names and proper nouns. The interpreters further explained that Mary Poppins' name was always fingerspelled M-A-R-Y-P-O-P-P-I-N-S, to parallel the fact that her name is always said in full throughout the play and is the show title, therefore the interpreters purposefully fingerspelled her name in full in the tL for the entirety of the show. These examples illustrate how the interpreters' process contained consideration as to how to capture the sL information in the most natural manner in ASL, while also anchoring the sL concept in the tL, thus paralleling the spectrum of translation that Nida's (1964) research illustrated. Candace and Lynnette explained that they believe the names of characters are very important because audience members often look them up in the playbill. In this interpretation the interpreters preserved the proper nouns by fingerspelling and often included relational information so that referencing could occur.

Theatrical interpreters can use their rehearsals to become familiar with the themes and important plot points throughout a show to better inform their linguistic decisions and to build a parallel framework into their interpretations. This helps them to achieve cohesion as they aim for equivalence. One example occurs moments later in the show, the mother and father discuss the hiring of a new nanny as well as the recent and frequent turnover of nannies employed by the family. When the mother and father discuss a replacement, the mother reminds the father of his own childhood nanny and says, "If only we could find someone like your old nanny." Candace interpreted the following tL: REMEMBER WOMAN CARE YOU? YOU STORY MANY. WISH FIND LIKE-HER. The tL utterance YOU STORY MANY seems as though it is an addition to the sL. However upon further investigation, I found that the interpreting team had determined that this information was implicit in the sL and simply made explicit within the tL. Also according to Candace, she considered the fact the father's old nanny would appear later in the show and determined it was important to build a framework prior to the nanny's appearance. Candace explained that the script and performance implied that the father had often described his old nanny as an ideal nanny for children and that later, as a plot point, the audience would find out she was in fact the opposite. Therefore Candace felt it was important to make this information of his idealized stories about his nanny explicit in the tL, thus building the framework for her appearance later on.

This concept of considering future plot occurrences and building a framework in the interpretation is instrumental in creating equivalent interpretations for theatrical performances. According to Rocks (2011), the unique nature of dramatic dialogue is that it is a representation of spontaneous dialogue and that many aspects of each characters language, interactions and turn taking provide information to the audience. In theatre, the interpreters know the plot and what is to be uttered in advance and can apply this extra contextual information to their preparation and

subsequent interpretation. Throughout this interpretation process, the interpreting team showed evidence of considering the sL and tL linguistic differences in regards to relational information, names and proper nouns in addition to individual character goals, character background and setting. The interpreters also considered the themes from the show and used framework strategies in their process to achieve equivalence in the tL. Consideration of this additional contextual information is important to the equivalence, effectiveness of the interpretation and, ultimately, the ability for the deaf audience members to have as close of an equivalent theatrical experience as possible.

Musical Aesthetics Influence Sign Production

Rhythm. A musical theatre performance typically contains a variety of song styles. There are ballads and up-tempo (quick) songs, among others. Each of them has their own rhythm, and the rhythm helps to create the mood and feeling of the song and character emotion. On several occasions the interpreters showed evidence of the rhythm of a particular song being paralleled in the rhythm of the tL sign production. One example of this was found in the data at the start of the show when the essential characters were being introduced in a song called *Prologue/Chim Chimney*. The actor sings the name of a character then there is a pause, during which time a light comes up on the character standing on the stage, then the next character's name is sung with a pause following and a light coming up on the character, and so on, for the following main characters. The interpreter signed his interpretation, simultaneously, MOTHER [pause] FATHER [pause] DAUGHTER [pause] SON [pause] all signed with the same rhythm as the music. In this way, the rhythm of sign production mirrored the musical rhythm and staccato style. Lynnette and Candace affirmed that natural ASL would not maintain meaning with prosodic features of sign production with such pauses between each sign, however in this example the interpreter was able to consciously parallel/mirror the pace, rhythm, and style of the sL in the tL while still maintaining semantic meaning. In doing so, the interpreter not only maintained meaning, but created an equivalent mood, dynamic and emotion in the tL.

Several examples of rhythm found in sign production, which paralleled the musical rhythm of the song, were found in this data. Another example of such was found as Mary Poppins sings *Practically Perfect* to the children, describing the long list of virtues she demonstrates daily in a perfect manner. The interpreter used the sign for checking off items from a checklist and checked off each item in conjunction with the rhythm of the musical instruments and vocal production within the song. This parallel rhythm in the sign production seems to help create the same light and happy mood in the tL. It also seems to help imply that there is a heightened discourse occurring, singing, different from spoken dialogue.

Similarly, later in the same song Mary Poppins sings, "I'm practically perfect in every way." The music has a light airy and up-beat rhythm. Lynnette signed ME ALMOST PERFECT. She continued by signing PERFECT PERFECT PERFECT descending in the sign space along her body from head to waist in a subtle rhythm corresponding to the song's airy up-beat rhythm. Not only does she capture the concept of being perfect from head to toe with this sign being repeated down her body, but the light up-beat feeling is also captured in how Lynnette physically produced the signs.

Musical accents. In music, making a single note louder or higher in pitch with the intention of articulating the note or musical expression creates dynamic accents. On several

occasions there were signs produced by the interpreters that had sharp or quickly articulated production that mirrored these dynamic accents in the music.

One example of this was found during the song *Practically Perfect*, in which the nanny, Mary Poppins, explains to the children that she is absolutely perfect in every way. Mary Poppins sings, "For one thing I'm renowned, my character is spit spot spick and span!" This line of music ends with a sharp musical accent. Simultaneously, the interpreter signs SOMETHING ALL-AROUND KNOW ME FAMOUS FOR WHAT? MY NAME-SHINE, her base hand stays and the interpreter depicts blowing the dust off the base hand (still in H hand shape, from the sign NAME) then the dominant hand polishes it. Finally the dominant hand signs SHINE off the H handshape. As the dominant hand signs SHINE at the end of the utterance, it moves quickly and sharply up and away from the base hand using more sign space than what is typical, while simultaneously the final music note is sharp, higher and louder. It seems as though the production of the sign SHINE paralleled the aesthetic produced by the music, thus giving the same feeling of the music to the tL.

The musical emphasis, or "accent" appeared again later in the same song when Lynnette signed CHECK-LIST, using her dominant hand she signed TERRIFIC off each finger of the base hand. The checking off of the list was produced with a light and airy flicking motion of the sign TERRIFIC similar and in time with that of the music, which had parallel musical accents. Again the meaning was maintained in the tL along with the aesthetics and feeling of the expression.

When asked, Lynnette explained that these aesthetics were discussed in rehearsal. She explained,

> When I have the space and time and because the music is giving the emphasis, I'll give emphasis. I'll only give the emphasis if it conforms to natural language. If the emphasis changes the meaning of the sign or obscures the meaning then it does not work as an effective interpretation. The auditory information is not the guiding factor, clarity of meaning comes before and then the poetry.

Candace affirmed that when there was auditory information found in the music, the interpreters then put it into the tL, but only when meaning would be retained.

Volume change. Throughout a musical theatre performance, changes in volume of the musical instruments and the singers' voices are used as a device to give texture, intensity and emotion to the performance. When music becomes stronger or louder, the mood and emotion become more intense for the audience. In this interpretation of *Mary Poppins*, it seemed as though the sign space, the signs themselves, and the interpreter's facial expressions often became larger in conjunction with the louder and more intense moments of these songs.

One example of such was found as the father asserts himself amongst the household staff and his wife by singing about how the household should be run and that he remains the "sovereign" and overseer of the house. As the song was ending and the music became louder and more climactic, the interpreters signed the final line of music with increasingly larger sign space and the prosody of their signs became more emphatic and exaggerated.

When asked about the larger sign space, the interpreters described this aspect of their interpretation as auditory information that was purposefully integrated into their interpretations. They explained that the song had auditory information that gave the sense of an increased intensity and power, so they consciously signed with larger sign space and made their facial expressions more intense, all keeping with ASL grammar norms. Evidence of this larger sign

space in conjunction with louder and more intense music was found throughout the interpretation.

Extension. Throughout musical theatre performances, often times a musical note is sung for an extended length of time (e.g. eight counts, ten counts, etc), often at the end of a musical phrase or song. This elevates the intensity and emotion of the character and heightens the theatricality of the moment. Evidence of this musical aesthetic was not found in the tL sign production in the form of extended or sustained signs mirroring the length of the musical note. This may be a result of the following reasons; interpreter lag time left little time to implement this element in the sign production; not many extended musical notes existed in the data analyzed; and/or interpreters did not consciously plan to incorporate this aesthetic.

It is worth noting that the songs found in this data were all up-tempo (quick) songs, which did not have many long sustained notes. The interpreters were asked to reflect on current and previous work to expound upon the concept of extending signs in conjunction with sustained musical notes. Both interpreters agreed that extending signs to mirror this musical aesthetic does occur in their interpretations, however it is contingent upon the type and purpose for the song. They stated that this kind of sign extension most frequently is used in love songs because they tend to be very slow and emotional. Candace explained that there is an intuitive nature to sensing how long is appropriate to extend a sign before stopping it and throwing the focus to the stage. According to Candace, interpreters can give a sense of an elongated moment to the audience, but then they should be able to look to feel the power radiating from the actor.

Surrogates and surrogate blends in ASL occur when a signer creates a partially visible demonstration of an event (Liddell, 2003). While this definition applies to a signer and not an interpreter, it can be applied to the concept of interpreters depicting what a character has expressed on stage, as this is a demonstration of a speech act event. According to Lynnette, ASL allows signers to use surrogates, but examining the length of time an interpreter stays in surrogate is essential. This theory can be applied to when and how long a sign can be extended for the purpose of mirroring the musical aesthetics, as the interpreter is mirroring the actor's speech/song performance. Lynnette stated, "It is important for an interpreter to know when the information has been given and then throw the focus back to the stage. Extended signs can compromise meaning if executed with unnatural prosody." According to both Candace and Lynnette, sensing the length of time to extend these signs during an interpretation takes experience and practice.

When asked about the influence of these musical aesthetics on sign production and whether these ASL linguistic devices, or sign manipulations, were conscious or intuitive decisions, the interpreters explained that they were conscious decisions in sign production. According to Lynnette, the interpreting team made a conscious effort to allow the music to inform the signs, with no compromise to meaning. The interpreting team discussed the mood, emotions and purpose for these musical aesthetics, (e.g. rhythm, volume) and considered how to capture the aesthetic in the tL. The data provided a variety of examples of the interpreters consciously incorporating this auditory information, musical aesthetics, from the sL into the tL to create a multi-layered dynamically equivalent interpretation.

Stage Action

Visual information: Strategies of throwing focus. Throughout this musical there were a variety of moments when action (visual information) occurred without any accompanying auditory information from the characters on stage. Characters may hide a prop; whisper an inaudible but deadly secret; or hide behind a door. Some of this visual information is extremely important to the plot of the play. When this visual information occurred in *Mary Poppins*, the interpreters guided the deaf audience's eyes to the stage by throwing focus to the stage. The data revealed that the interpreters employed this strategy in several ways; the interpreters folded their hands and looked to the stage, simply looked to the stage or quickly shifted their eye gaze in the direction of the action. Which of the above strategies was enlisted for each occurrence seemed to depend on what the action was, as well as the speed at which the action took place. The interpreters assessed the visual information and timing, taking lag time into consideration during the rehearsal process, and made decisions accordingly.

Musical theatre performances have songs often rich with visual information, or stage action and choreography, which are some of the biggest draws for musical theatre audiences. The culmination of a song can occur in a variety of ways and often includes very purposeful staging or choreography. During the interviews, the interpreters explained that they generally throw the focus to the stage at the end of songs when long notes were being sung and no new information was being given. However, these decisions were made during the rehearsal process when considering each dance number and end of song in regard to when exactly and how to throw focus.

The data analyzed for this study contained a total of six songs. Two songs ended with no major culminating moment, but rather dialogue overlapping with the end of the music creating a quick transition into the following scene. The interpreters followed the flow of the performance from song into scene. Three songs: *Cherry Tree Lane*, *Practically Perfect*, and *Jolly Holiday*, concluded with the interpreters throwing the focus back to the stage as the singers held their final notes for several more counts. Again, at the conclusion of *Cherry Tree Lane* and *Practically Perfect* they finish their interpretation then quickly fold their hands and looked to the stage to watch the final moment of stage action while the final note was sung. For the culmination of *Jolly Holiday* the interpreters took a seat and observed the final chorus and choreography. It is important to note that the conclusion of this song is different from the previous two songs in that the lyrics are a repetition of the previous chorus and the choreography becomes larger and more dramatic before it ends with a big flurry of movement. There was no new information coming from an auditory level, but rather a lot of information on a visual level, as the choreography grew in intensity. The interpreters accounted for this visual information by throwing focus to the stage and stepping completely out of view.

Concurrent visual and auditory information: Strategies of sharing focus. I discovered several strategies in the data for sharing focus, such as 1) delaying the start of the interpretation, 2) incorporating the visual information into the tL interpretation, and 3) simultaneously interpreting using smaller sign space. It became clear to me after analysis and interviews that each of these strategies was enlisted after careful consideration of the sL and theatrical moment being presented. Each strategy was applied when appropriate; with attention to what would retain meaning and produce an effective interpretation incorporating all the information being produced at a given moment auditory and visual in nature. The following

examples are just of few of the many "sharing focus" strategies enlisted during this interpretation.

Delaying the start. Delaying the start of the interpretation allows the deaf audience to see the action on stage first and then look to the interpreters who interpret what was just uttered. One example occurred when Mary Poppins enters the park and stands in front of her friend Bert. Without looking up, Bert immediately recognizes her shadow and quickly tells Mary Poppins to stand still and that he can recognize her from her silhouette. The interpreter delayed his interpretation for several seconds while he looked to the stage for Mary Poppin's entrance and Bert's simultaneous utterance, then interpreted the utterance a moment later in a consecutive manner. When the interpreters were asked about the purpose of this delay, they explained that the interpreter made a conscious decision to allow the focus to remain on stage for the visual information to be seen before the interpretation began.

Incorporating visual information. An example of sharing focus by incorporating visual information into the tL interpretation while producing the tL simultaneously, occurred when the father crumples up a paper, throws it in the fire place and then a brief wind blows the living room drapes. The family feels and hears the wind inside their home and reacts with surprise. This action was crucial albeit brief. Given that the interpretation was produced slightly after it was spoken, due to lag time, and there was the risk that the deaf audience might miss this visual information, the interpreter incorporated the sign WIND into the interpretation and quickly looked to the stage. The purpose of this was to inform the deaf audience as to what exactly the characters were reacting. According to Lynnette, this was a way of importing information into the interpretation from the visual information provided on stage. Candace further explained,

> That is about focus for the audience. The interpreter tells us it is wind, giving them specific information when they look up at the stage. If they are busy following us, it is a perfect time to give that information.

Small sign space. Another strategy for sharing focus to mitigate concurrent visual and auditory demands is simultaneous interpretation with repetitive or smaller sign space. One example of this strategy occurred when Mary Poppins used her magic to pull large objects (e.g. hat stand, plant, etc.) out of her small carpetbag while she sings *Practically Perfect*. The magic is occurring on stage simultaneous to the lyrics describing her reputation for being perfect. Both were integral to the character and the plot of the show and a well-known scene. These competing demands of auditory and visual information occurred for the entirety of the song, presenting a challenge to the interpreting team. The data showed that the interpreter sometimes sped up her interpretation then threw focus to the stage and other times produced the interpretation using a small sign space. According to Lynnette, an interpreter must have an awareness of the audience's divided attention. When asked about how she came to decide which strategies to employ, Lynnette stated,

> We agreed in advance that the hat stand moment would be a moment to throw focus to the stage, which meant I had to sign the line earlier, keep the signing small so the deaf audience could look back and forth from the stage to the interpreter. However, there is magic happening all throughout the song. You have to weigh which visual information is more important at that moment- Mary Poppins' display of magic, or the lyrics of the song, which will be repeated in *Practically Perfect.* There is more than one opportunity

> to get that information, while there is only one opportunity to see the magic she displays while unpacking her hat stand. This information influences signing style. My intent was to keep the signing small and keep it going. So the deaf audience can look and come back. If I made the signs big, it becomes too important and is calling deaf eyes.

This visual competition will be inherent in most theatrical productions. The interpreters were asked to reflect on how they determined which actions needed the audience's attention and when to throw focus to the stage. They reflected on their process and explained that the first time they observe a show during their process they watch for essential visual information and interesting visual elements. From there, they know to build in time for those moments to be seen by the deaf audience so they receive both the auditory and visual information, accurately and completely.

Rapid Speech and Lag Time

Theatrical performances are often written to reflect life; often-dramatic moments of real life, and in doing so often replicate the rapid speech we find in real life discourse. When the performance has rapid speech and turn taking as well as latching of utterances, how do the interpreters manage the flow of information? Due to the fact that interpreters are not able to slow or interrupt the sL, interpreters must find strategies to manage the rapid speech they encounter while interpreting. Some theatrical interpreters may decide to memorize succinct tL translations in advance of the interpreted performance. However, the interpreters in this study do not memorize translations in advance, but rather they become familiar with the script, observe performances and note moments when more economic interpretations are necessary. Then they apply active listening and retention skills for moments when their team has long lag time and time is constrained. The team of interpreters in this study rehearsed in the back of the theatre during live performances, enabling them to discover the instances where speed of dialogue was challenging. Through the rehearsal process they were able to explore how much time it took to produce an interpretation of an utterance and if necessary, experiment with changes to the interpretation to make it more economic and closer to the sL speed. This method enabled the interpreters to be better equipped to mitigate rapid speech and longer lag times and the resulting demands.

When asked about the implications of lag time in theatrical interpreting, Lynnette explained that it is necessary to keep the dialogue moving and when working between languages, an interpreter must consider how different languages compress and expand. The production of an utterance may take longer in one language than another. Therefore considering more succinct interpretations, or more economic interpretations, is important to mitigate the demands of rapid speech and interpreter lag time. In keeping with the interpreting team's goal of natural discourse, this team did not memorize an economic translation in advance. According to Lynnette, one strategy for coping with a team interpreter's long lag time, is to listen to the sL, and distinguish what plot-motivating information must be included in the subsequent tL, and paraphrase accordingly once it is your turn. This strategy is employed when the interpreter assesses that there would not be enough time to interpret all of the lines spoken. Lynnette recognizes that this requires thorough listening skills and the retention of information, or the use of short-term or working memory.

In general, interpreters know that one interpreter must wait for their team to finish before they begin to sign, so that the interpreters are not competing for the deaf consumer's attention. However, due to the fact that theatre is scripted, directed, and rehearsed, it can be assumed that the use of rapid speech and overlapping dialogue on stage is a purposeful decision. During the interview, Candace explained that the interpreting team produced their interpretations in a parallel manner to the overlapping stage dialogue, with the intention to create similar character and language dynamics for the deaf audience. Lynnette states, "We also work with the same philosophy of keeping natural language in regards to overlapping dialogue. We use eye contact, we wait, and we may nudge/tap each other as attention-getting or turn-taking devices that are intrinsic to ASL." Evidence of natural use of signing, rapid turn taking and latching utterances in ASL were found throughout the interpretation, mirroring the high involvement style spoken in the sL.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the extant literature on interpreting for theatrical performances. The goal of this research was to discover the linguistic and paralinguistic demands and interpreting strategies for a theatrical performance. It was evident from analysis and the participants' interviews that the task of interpreting for a theatrical performance is a complicated endeavor.

This study investigated the process and product of an interpreted theatrical performance. Data analysis found that the interpreters achieved a dynamically equivalent tL following a rehearsal process rich with observations of performances as well as interpreter tL exploration and consideration of sL anchors. While seeking dynamic equivalence interpreters considered meaning, contextual factors, Deaf culture and ASL norms. However, they also took into account additional contextual factors such as theatrical aesthetics and devices. Interviews with the interpreting team discovered that the process for creating a theatrical interpretation was in fact a hybrid method, a blend of translation and interpretation methods. Turner and Pollitt (2002) also found that theatre interpreting is neither interpreting nor translating but a hybrid form. The interpreters considered themes from the show as well as character goals and plot points to create a parallel framework in the interpretation. According to Candace, many interpreters interpret line by line, instead of considering the bigger picture, being constructed by the playwright. Lynnette stated, "Our approach is that we consider the whole, then how the pieces fit into the whole, rather than the pieces making the whole."

Findings revealed that musical aesthetics such as rhythm, musical "accents" (or emphasis), volume changes and musical extensions were addressed during the interpretation process with the goal to achieve a tL which contained a comparable visual aesthetic to that of the auditory aesthetic from the sL. The interpreters considered how tone, mood and feeling produced by the music and could be explored linguistically and paralleled in tL sign production. The data included the use of manipulated ASL prosody, sign space, sign size and facial expressions to parallel auditory information contained in the musical aesthetics. The interpreters were conscious of employing this strategy only when it was relaying information.

Visual information requires the deaf audience's attention; therefore interpreters must act as guides to lead deaf audience members to focus on the stage when essential plot-motivating visual information occurs. The interpreters in this study met the complicated demands of satisfying simultaneous auditory and visual information. The interpreters used various

techniques both to throw focus to visual information taking place on stage and to share focus during the concurrent presentation of auditory and visual information. The data showed evidence of the interpreters throwing focus in several ways: folding hands, looking to the stage, and shifting eye gaze. In order to satisfy the challenge of concurrent auditory and visual information during the theatrical interpretation, interpreters employed three techniques to share focus with the stage such as delaying the interpretation until after the action, including visual information in the interpretation and using small sign space to signal lesser importance of the tL. By employing these strategies for throwing focus and sharing focus, the interpreters invited the deaf audience to enjoy the acting performances and the myriad of action occurring on stage.

Finally, high involvement style communication and lag time implications for theatrical interpreting was examined. Interpreters used rehearsal time to find moments of rapid speech and explored economic interpretations. Overlapping interpretation only occurred parallel to when the characters overlapped, in a purposeful manner. This study also found that to mitigate rapid turn taking and latching utterances interpreters employed strategies derived from natural discourse such as eye contact, nudging their team and ASL latching of utterances. The interpreters identified that theatrical interpreting does not permit a long lag time. When a long lag time occurs interpreters employ the following strategies: listen to previous utterance, assess what paraphrasing is necessary and keep plot-motivating information in the tL, use of short term memory, and if necessary, taking the turn and adding necessary information from the other character's utterance.

The results of this study provide an in-depth examination of an under-researched domain of interpreting and offers insights into the linguistic and artistic devices employed by highly experienced theatrical interpreters.

Limitations

There are several limitations to consider before taking a broad view of these results. To examine the demands and strategies in this setting, I analyzed an interpreted Broadway musical and conducted two interviews with the theatrical interpreting team. The limited availability of published videos of interpreted professional theatre, due to union restrictions, drastically narrowed the availability and selection of data for this study.

First, only twenty-minutes of this performance had been recorded, further limiting the amount of data available. While this was sufficient for the purpose of this study, examining a full show from beginning to end would afford more opportunities to understand the work and identify more samples to analyze. Secondly, the interpretation studied was on a Broadway stage. It is important to recognize that the majority of interpreted theatre occurs off Broadway at universities, schools, as well as community and regional theatres. Where and by whom the theatrical performance is produced may have an impact on space, technical effects, and musical accompaniment among other things, which will have implications for the interpreters work. Third, the data included three veteran interpreters who are native language users of ASL. This afforded me the opportunity to study the work of individuals who had native fluency, many years of experience and who had refined their approach to their work. The experience and background of interpreters will also impact the results of such a study, therefore it must be taken into account and understood that interpreters with less experience and fluency may have various, or additional, demands and employ different strategies to their practice. Fourth, this study examined only one team's approach to interpreting a performance. These findings provide some insight

into one team's process, considerations and strategies which may be similar to other interpreting teams, however having a larger sample size of interpreting teams would provide a more diverse sample of work to study to get a greater understanding of the processes that exist in this specialization.

Despite these limitations, much was gleaned from this data that can provide great insight into the work of interpreting for theatrical performances. Specific efforts were focused on finding data that would have a high level of professional production and performance values as well as a skilled and experienced interpreting team.

Implications for Future Studies

The findings presented are derived from an analysis of one case study of an interpreted performance; however, these findings may apply to other interpreted performances and interpreting teams. Further investigation in this area may benefit by studying demands and interpreting strategies found in interpretations of plays in various genres of theatre (Shakespearean, Commedia dell'arte, comedies as well as contemporary plays). Research pertaining to effective training for theatrical interpreters would benefit practitioners and educators in this specialization as well. Further study into effective interpreting team methods would shed light on the variety of approaches employed in the field. Exploration of interpreter positioning in the theatre and styles such as shadowing and zone interpreting would be informative as well. Finally, and importantly, I would also recommend that research on deaf audience preferences as well as the practice of Deaf Interpreters as consultants and/or interpreting directors be conducted.

Interpreting Implications

Interpreter skill development opportunities in this specialization are not easily or often found. Interpreters would benefit greatly by training and professional development opportunities for approaching their theatrical interpreting practice. Mentoring in theatrical interpreting would also provide great learning opportunities and exposure amongst interpreters looking to develop their practice and for those looking to break into this specialization. More use of deaf interpreters working with interpreting teams to support exploration and development of interpretations would benefit interpreters and deaf audiences immeasurably. Very little literature exists, therefore research in a variety of areas of theatrical interpreting would provide great insight into this specialization and allow interpreters to be more educated about their practice, better able to satisfy the various challenges of their theatrical interpreting work, and thus to provide an equally dynamic theatrical experience for the Deaf audience.

References

Cokely, D. (1992). *Interpretation: A sociolinguistic model*. Burtonsville, MD: Linstok Press.

Demers, H. (2005). The working interpreter. In T. Janzen (Ed.) *Topics in signed language interpreting*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Gebron, J. (1996). *Sign the speech: An introduction to theatrical interpreting*. Hillsboro, OR: Butte Publications.

Gile, D. (2009). *Basic concepts and models for interpreter and translator training*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins..

Larson, M. (1998). *Meaning-based translation*. New York, NY: University Press of America.

Liddell, S. (2003). *Grammar, gesture, and meaning in American Sign Language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Napier, J., McKee, R., & Goswell, D. (2006). *Sign language interpreting: Theory and practice in Australia and New Zealand*. Sydney, Australia: The Federation Press.

Nida, E. (1964). *Toward a science of translating*. Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill.

Rocks, S. (2011). *The theatre sign language interpreter and the competing visual narrative: The translation and interpretation of theatrical texts to British Sign Language.* In R. Baines, C. Marinetti, & M. Perteghella (Eds.), Staging and performing translation. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Russell, D., & Shaw, R., (2009). Interview with a scholar: In conversation with Risa Shaw. *The International Journal of Interpreter Education,* 1. Retrieved from http://www.cit-asl.org/IJIE/2009_Vol1/OpenForum-full.html

Roy, C. (2000). *Interpreting as a discourse process*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Seleskovitch, D. (1994). *Interpreting for international conferences: Problems of language and communication*. Arlington, VA: Pen and Booth.

Tannen, D. (1984). *Conversational style: Analyzing talk among friends*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Turner, G., & Pollitt, K. (2002). Community interpreting meets literary translation: English-British Sign Language interpreting in the theatre. *The Translator, 8*(1), 25-48.